

March 4, 1986

Dear Hanna Batatu,

Once, when I said that the greatest empiricist was the greatest dialectician, Karl Marx, I was critiqued not only by pragmatists but comrades. The truth however is: Why do you think Marx spent two full decades -- and that after he already declared at the defeat of the 1848-49 Revolutions, the battle cry should be Revolution in Permanence -- studying all the facts, all the statistics and all the class struggles, on how precisely was labor with its four fingers and a thumb changed everytime a new technological machine was brought in? Philosophy as action becomes revolution because, precisely because, all the facts, and all the struggles against those statistics, dialectically result in nothing short of the urge-for uprooting that reality. And that is only first negation. "Revolution in Permanence", or the second negation, i.e. that resolution can be fully achieved only after, within a society without exploitation, you begin to reorganize yourself.

So I am indeed very interested in your study that you claim is not theoretical, but empirical. I learned a great deal from your encyclopaedic work on Iraq, and I am surely looking forward to know about your work on Syria. First there is the question of the Ba'ath Party, which has undergone so many transformations into opposite that one who thought it may be a new alternative to either Communism or Nasserism can hardly see any relationship between it and Syria today. And yet even the most "revolutionary" of those leaders are very big buddies with Assad right now. And the 'ulama' have certainly played so decisive a role in usurping the Iranian Revolution. The historic periods have changed as well, but you could hardly call it the subjective answer to the objective pull of any kind of revolutionary forces. You know I am now working on a new work on the Dialectics of Organization, and believe me the ulama have nothing to learn on partinost from Stalin; the mosques did very well indeed on that subject. What was the social landscape of Syrian life when you visited last time?

I look forward to hearing from you. Did I send you my Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution? I would especially like to get your comments on chapter 12 which is a challenge to all post-Marx Marxists on the whole question of multilinearism vs. unilinearism, and spontaneity vs. party. I will be glad to send it to you if you don't have it. Meanwhile I enclose what I had a great deal to do with in editing and co-authoring the new Introduction/Overview, Frantz Fanon Soweto and American Black Thought.

Yours,

*Royce*

11178